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FOLLOW-UP TO THE MULTI-DONOR EVALUATION OF UNICEF: GENERAL PROGRAMME STRATEGY

SUMMARY

The present report was prepared in response to decision 1994/A/8 (E/ICEF/1994/13 (Part III)), adopted by the Executive Board at its 1994 annual session, in which the Executive Director was requested to present a full report on the following subjects to the first regular session of 1995: a general strategy document on capacity-building, empowerment, service delivery and advocacy; improved programme designs for all UNICEF priority sectors, taking into account all three strategy elements; and a strategy paper on emergency assistance based on all three strategy elements and taking into account the role of UNICEF within the United Nations system and the need to strengthen linkages between UNICEF emergency work and its development goals. The strategy on emergency assistance is included in the report on UNICEF emergency operations (E/ICEF/1995/5).

As part of the same decision, the Executive Director was also requested to report to the Board, as an integral part of the response to the requests mentioned above, as to which operational strategies and concrete measures the secretariat intends to introduce to adjust UNICEF's own organizational capacity.

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1. As requested by the Executive Board in its decision 1994/A/8 (E/ICEF/1994/13 (Part III)), adopted at its 1994 annual session, the secretariat presented to the Board at its third regular session of 1994 (3-5 October) a status report on the various requests of the Executive Board for follow-up documents to the multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF (E/ICEF/1994/L.20).

2. The present report provides a basic outline of the overall programme strategies to be incorporated in the next medium-term plan of UNICEF, which will be submitted to the Executive Board at its 1996 annual session. This will allow the secretariat to build on the important strategic conclusions and recommendations of the management review and to receive feedback from the Executive Board on the different sectoral strategy documents being presented to the Executive Board in the course of 1995. As the medium-term plan reflects the major strategies and directions of UNICEF programmes, the multi-donor evaluators used the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1995 (E/ICEF/1992/3) to develop their strategic choices framework (see annex I). Therefore, it would be appropriate to include a finalized comprehensive strategy section in the new medium-term plan to illustrate how UNICEF intends to implement the recommendations contained in the multi-donor evaluation as an integral part of its country programmes of cooperation and sectoral strategies.

3. As follow-up to the multi-donor evaluation, the Executive Board retained four strategies as representative for the majority of UNICEF programmes: service delivery; capacity-building; empowerment; and advocacy. All sectoral policy documents reflect this framework of strategic choices and increasingly emphasize capacity-building at different levels of society, especially empowerment at the community level. This reflects a clear evolution in UNICEF programming - as was also suggested in the multi-donor evaluation - by building on service delivery to incorporate greater emphasis on capacity-building and empowerment of communities and households.

4. The findings and recommendations of the multi-donor evaluation are being internalized in UNICEF programme guidelines and policy and strategy papers. Immediately following the Executive Board's consideration of the evaluation report, UNICEF issued an executive directive (CF/EXD/1993-007) to all its field offices providing guidance on how to incorporate its recommendations in the preparation and implementation of country programmes, as well as in monitoring and evaluation. This directive has become a key point of reference in mid-term reviews and strategy discussions with Governments and other partners influencing UNICEF-assisted programmes.

5. In August 1994, UNICEF issued a programme directive (CF/PD/PRO/94-005) containing guidelines for preparing country programme submissions to the Executive Board. This directive details how UNICEF field offices should relate the mix of the strategies recommended by the multi-donor evaluation in country programmes. It states as follows:

> "The choice of strategies should cover both achievement and sustainability of country programme objectives. Strengthening national capacities needs to be given special attention as the key to sustainability of programmes and self-reliance of countries. It is also important for implementing the other strategies. How national capacity-building is reflected in the

programme should be highlighted. The mix of strategies should involve a clear consideration of cost-effectiveness, which would include issues related to sustainability."

The instruction suggests further that the position paper, which is developed by the country office at the outset of the country programme exercise, should contain considerations on proposed sectoral programme strategies. Furthermore, it stresses the need for a phased programming of sustainability according to a realistic assessment of the kinds of capacity-building that are needed for long-term sustainability. A "ten point test of sustainable programming" includes the identification of institutions and infrastructure built or strengthened during programme implementation; the gender-specific impact of programmes; the impact on existing institutions; the operational capacity of programmes if external support is suspended; the affordability of unit costs; the involvement of non-traditional partners, community groups and non-governmental organizations; the encouragement of self-reliance and building of local capacity; the extent of response to people's felt needs; the impact on the environment; and the synergistic impact on other programmes in reaching other objectives.

6. Detailed step-by-step guidelines for preparing country programmes are contained in the UNICEF Policy and Procedure Manual - Book D - Programme Operations. This manual, which is currently under revision and is expected to be finalized in mid-1995, will further incorporate specific guidelines to reflect the strategic mix of programme strategies. As the country programming process is at the heart of UNICEF cooperation, elaboration of these guidelines on incorporating the concerns expressed in the multi-donor evaluation is perhaps the most effective way to ensure that these concepts are fully internalized in the UNICEF programming process.

7. In addition to these broad guidelines on country programming, UNICEF is currently involved in preparing several sectoral policy and strategy papers which will address explicitly how the above strategic elements are incorporated into these sectoral policies and how UNICEF organizational capacity will be adjusted to reflect these strategic choices, as specifically referred to in document E/ICEF/1994/L.20, paragraph 2.

8. The secretariat is currently preparing three policy/strategy papers - on health, education, and water and environmental sanitation - which will be presented to the Executive Board in 1995. A policy/strategy paper on children in especially difficult circumstances will be presented to the Board in 1996. All these reports are being prepared in collaboration with the field offices and regional offices and in consultation with sister United Nations agencies and selected international non-governmental organizations. These papers offer another opportunity to incorporate the strategic mix recommended by the multi-donor evaluation. In recent years, policy papers on improved nutrition of children and women in developing countries (E/ICEF/1990/L.6) and on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (E/ICEF/1994/L.5 and Add.1) were submitted and approved by the Executive Board (E/ICEF/1990/13, decision 1990/19, and E/ICEF/1994/13 (Part III), decision 1994/A/4, respectively).

9. In general, the policies and strategies in the different sectors all build on the same conceptual framework that was presented to the Executive Board for the first time in the nutrition policy paper (E/ICEF/1990/L.6) (see annex II). The multi-donor evaluation commented favourably on the advantages of the nutrition strategies based on this conceptual framework. This conceptual framework illustrated how malnutrition and death in children and women are the results of a long sequence of interlinked events and causal relationships at different levels: the manifestations of the problem; its immediate causes; the underlying causes; and the basic causes. Basing actions solely on an assessment of the manifestations is difficult and often inadequate to achieve sustained improvements. It becomes clear from the model that in order to achieve real change in the situation of women and children, the "triple A" cycle of assessment, analysis and action must be used at the different levels of the causes of malnutrition. The framework also illustrates the multisectoral nature of development problems and helps in identifying causative relationships. It is important to note, however, that this general framework needs to be readjusted in the light of conditions in a particular situation. It is for this purpose that an ongoing situation analysis, paired with the "triple A" cycle of assessment, analysis and action, is an essential part of this approach of adjusting action to the changing situation.

10. The water and environmental sanitation and the health policy papers build on the same conceptual framework and emphasize both the intersectoral relationships and the need to adjust frameworks and courses of action to the causative factors identified on the ground. The involvement of the communities and the households is considered essential to achieve appropriate assessment, analysis and action. The health policy paper identifies as its principal focus the household as the centre of health action, while the water and environmental sanitation policy paper focuses on the community and household levels. In education, the ability to work closely with communities in areas of interest to them, and with a priority focus on the girl child, is seen as essential; consequently, early childhood education directed towards parents and care-givers through home- and community-based models is emphasized.

11. The gender policy has set as one of its main strategies the mainstreaming of gender issues in all programmes. This again illustrates the need for an intersectoral approach in programming, as expressed in the other sectoral papers, which emphasize that causes of problems in health, nutrition, water and environmental sanitation, and education are all interrelated.

12. Capacity-building and institution-strengthening continue to be a major focus of UNICEF programming. An important aspect of health policy is the enhancement of health information processes, the regulatory and advocacy capacities of the health sector and the building of intersectoral partnerships to establish common goals. In education, the approach to primary education includes paying special attention to strengthening major institutions that support primary education and the development of a unified system of education that accommodates diversity. It also includes the development of a high-quality, cost-effective curriculum, a policy dialogue to ensure that the focus on primary education fits into a holistic plan, and participation and support for the training of primary school teachers and head teachers, as well as basic education administrators and other basic education support systems. In

the water and environmental sanitation sector, assistance will be provided to Governments for policy formulation and the transfer of knowledge and capacity to allow local communities to control available resources, in addition to technical support when delivering environmental sanitation, hygiene education and household water security.

13. The emphasis on the strengthening of capacity-building and empowerment elements reflects the policy choice made by UNICEF on the basis of comparative advantage and limited resources. Service delivery is important for demonstration purposes as an incentive and example leading to changes in policies and national programme prioritization. Therefore, in education, it is suggested that support be provided for policy dialogue and demonstration projects for countries to take to scale, and that the support focus on improving the primary education system and not on dispersed and fragmented activities.

14. The focus on empowerment is emphasized strongly in the draft health policy paper, which states that health empowerment is the ability to make informed health decisions and to act on them. The more motivated and informed a family is, the more likely it is that it will make the most effective choice in the nutrition, health behaviour, disease prevention and treatment options available to it. The health policy paper also analyses the multisectoral determinants that affect the status of women and children within a given community. These factors comprise the political and social organization of a community, the physical environment and the social and economic determinants. Both the health and the education policy papers also stress the need for advocacy to raise, in general, the awareness about the situation of children, to create political will for action, to influence policies and to create a moral environment that puts the child first.

15. Most of the policy documents elaborate further the four strategies as listed above, to include policy dialogue, cost-effective approaches, community participation and involvement, partnership-building, mobilization of resources and commitment, and special programmes aimed at responding to emergency situations and special groups such as children in especially difficult circumstances. It is clear, however, that all of the above can be ranked under the four main strategies. In this respect, it is important to remember the findings of the multi-donor evaluation that all of the strategies mentioned by UNICEF in its medium-term plan for the period 1992-1995 were covered by the three main categories identified by the multi-donor evaluation. (It should be noted that advocacy was added later by the Executive Board upon its review of the evaluation.) As illustrated in annex I, all UNICEF strategies can be linked to the main strategies identified.

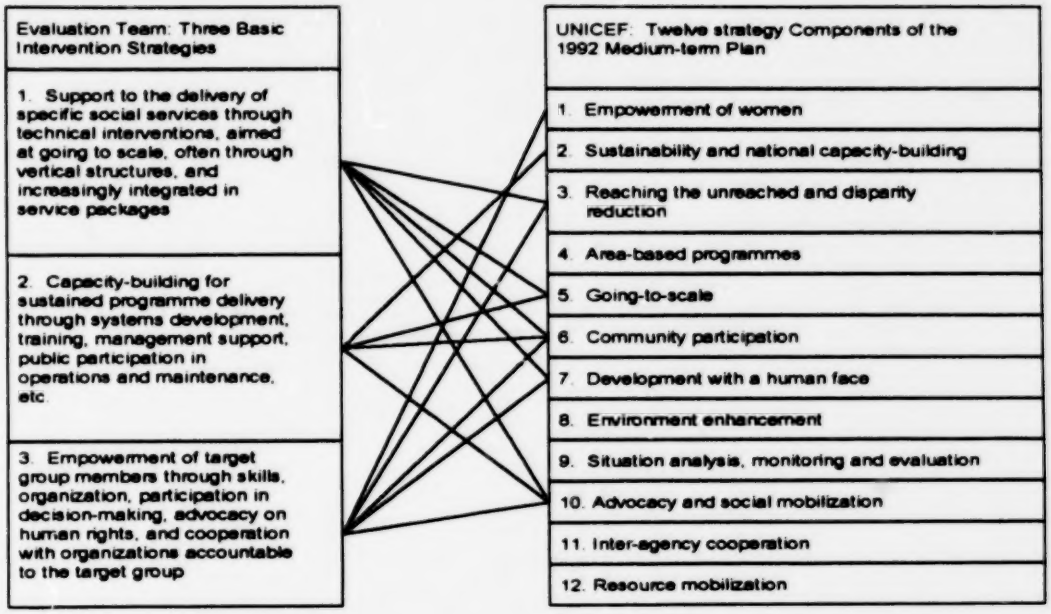
16. All of the policy papers also reflect the need for UNICEF to work at different levels of society. Whereas it is obvious that the main focus of action is at the household (health) and community levels (most of the others), it is clear that action is required also at district, national and global levels. At each level, the focus is on respective areas of capacity-building, institution-strengthening (inter alia, monitoring capacities) and information and social mobilization. At the global level, UNICEF needs to work closely with Governments, international organizations, the World Bank and regional banks, non-governmental organizations and other partners such as research institutions

and centres of excellence to support the achievement of the common goals for the year 2000 and their longer-term sustainability, as well as to set in motion a process of setting new goals in different sectors for future decades.

17. The above overview of programme strategies as outlined in the sectoral policy and strategy papers under preparation is presented to illustrate the secretariat response to the recommendations of the multi-donor evaluation, as supported by the Executive Board, on incorporating an appropriate mix of strategic choices in all UNICEF programming. A more comprehensive and concrete elaboration of this strategic plan will be incorporated in the next medium-term plan to be presented to the Executive Board in 1996.

Annex I

UNICEF PROGRAMME STRATEGIES


Evaluation Team: Three Basic Intervention Strategies
1. Support to the delivery of specific social services through technical interventions, aimed at going to scale, often through vertical structures, and increasingly integrated in service packages
2. Capacity-building for sustained programme delivery through systems development, training, management support, public participation in operations and maintenance, etc.
3. Empowerment of target group members through skills, organization, participation in decision-making, advocacy on human rights, and cooperation with organizations accountable to the target group
UNICEF: Twelve strategy Components of the 1992 Medium-term Plan
1. Empowerment of women
2. Sustainability and national capacity-building
3. Reaching the unreached and disparity reduction
4. Area-based programmes
5. Going-to-scale
6. Community participation
7. Development with a human face
8. Environment enhancement
9. Situation analysis, monitoring and evaluation
10. Advocacy and social mobilization
11. Inter-agency cooperation
12. Resource mobilization

Annex II

CAUSES OF MALNUTRITION AND DEATH